

2023 MCAS Sample Student Work and Scoring Guide

Grade 4 English Language Arts

Question 12: Essay

Reporting Categories: Language and Writing

Standard: [L.PK-12.1](#) - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Standard: [L.PK-12.2](#) - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Standard: [L.PK-12.3](#) - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Standard: [W.PK-12.2](#) - Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Standard: [W.PK-12.4](#) - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Item Description: Write an essay that explains a key concept in the passage; use important information from the passage as evidence.

[View item in MCAS Digital Item Library](#)

Essay Prompt

For this question, you will write an essay based on the passage(s). Your writing should:

- Present and develop a central idea
- Provide evidence and/or details from the passage(s).
- Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Based on *Komodo Dragons*, write an essay that explains what physical characteristics help the Komodo dragon survive. Be sure to use information from the passage to develop your essay.

Continue to the following page to see the scoring guides for this question. Sample student responses begin on page 3. The annotations that appear above each sample response describe elements of the response that contributed to its score for Idea Development and Standard English Conventions.

Scoring Guide for Idea Development

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is clear and fully developed • Effective selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Effective organization • Clear expression of ideas • Full awareness of the purpose for writing
4B	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is general and moderately developed • Appropriate selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Moderate organization • Adequate expression of ideas • Sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be present and is somewhat developed • Limited selection and explanation of evidence and/or details • Limited organization • Basic expression of ideas • Partial awareness of the purpose for writing
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea is not present and/or not developed • Insufficient evidence and/or details • Minimal or no organization • Poor expression of ideas • Minimal awareness of the purpose for writing
0	The response shows evidence the student has read the text, but does not address the question or incorrectly responds to the question.

Scoring Guide for Standard English Conventions

Select a score point in the table below to view the sample student response.

Score*	Description
3A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent control of a variety of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
3B	
3C	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly consistent control of sentence structures relative to length of essay • Mostly consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or length of essay
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little control and/or no variety in sentence structure and/or • Little control of grammar, usage, and mechanics relative to complexity and/or insufficient length
0	Sentences are formed incorrectly with no control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and/or insufficient length.

*In both scoring guides, letters are used to distinguish between sample student responses that earned the same score (e.g., 4A and 4B).

Idea Development—Score Point 4A

The essay includes a clearly stated central idea and a fully developed explanation of the physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive. Relevant quotations from the passage provide information about the jaws, claws, tail, size, scales, and tongue of the Komodo dragon, and explanations of why these characteristics are important to the Komodo dragon's survival are included. The essay is effectively organized with appropriate transitions between ideas. There is a clear expression of ideas and a full awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3A

The essay contains a variety of sentence structures, including "After all, who'd willingly go and fight with one of these gigantic, fierce creatures anyway? No wonder they have no predators to harm them in any way!" and "Also, the Komodo has a huge body covered with tough scales." Minor errors in punctuation do not detract from comprehension. Overall, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

There are many physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive. First, they have strong, powerful jaws, and long, sharp claws to protect themselves. "The carnivorous monitors have powerful jaws," the text explains. Such powerful jaws help the Komodo dragon to eat incredibly quickly, and very, very much. "They may eat up to 5.5 pounds (2.5 kg) of meat in a single minute," the text supports. Plus, some Komodos have been known to eat 80% of their body weight in a single feeding, so they don't eat very often. "It's long, sharp claws look as though they could rip anything apart," the text describes. Komodo dragons have great ways to protect themselves!!

In addition to this, they have long, whiplike tails, and are the world's largest and heaviest lizard. "Using their muscular tails as support, male dragons stand tall on their hind legs to attack," the text states. Having a powerful tail is very useful to a Komodo dragon, as it fights other Komodo dragons! "By the time they are 4 years old, young Komodos are about 4 feet (1.2 m) long. They have grown large enough to leave the safety of the trees and live on the ground," the text explains. That characteristic proves their greatness in size. After all, who'd willingly go and fight with one of these gigantic, fierce creatures anyway? No wonder they have no predators to harm them in any way!

Also, the Komodo has a huge body covered with tough scales. "Its massive body is covered in what looks like armor," the text describes. The Komodo dragon has plenty of ways to prevent themselves from getting hurt! Imagine trying to harm a ginormous body covered in armor. That's how tough a Komodo dragon's skin is! Just very tough!

Finally, the Komodo dragon has an amazing tongue. It can pick up scents in the air, and detect prey up to 3.1 miles away! Also, the Komodo dragon can tell the direction of an animal based on what side of its tongue picked up a stronger scent! The text states, "The organs detect even faint traces of a nearby animal's scent." That certainly helps these massive dragons find and catch prey! Therefore, those are the physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)

Idea Development—Score Point 4B

The essay includes a clearly stated central idea and a fully developed explanation of the physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive. Supporting information paraphrased from the passage explains how the tongue, size, scales, and claws enable the Komodo dragon to survive. The essay is effectively organized with clear transitions between ideas: “The next way,” “The last way,” and “In conclusion.” The essay is fully developed and is a clear expression of relevant information. There is a full awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3B

The essay shows consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics and includes a variety of sentence structures, such as the following introductory sentence: “Have you ever wondered how the Komodo Dragons stay at the top of the food chain?” Minor spelling and punctuation errors do not interfere with the overall understanding of the essay. Given its length and complexity, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

Komodo Dragons And How they Survive

Have you ever wondered how the Komodo Dragons stay at the top of the food chain? If you are wondering here are some reasons why.

Komodo dragons have a collection of things to kill or track down animals the first one is How komodo dragons can use their tongue to track an animal up to 3.1 miles away . How they do this is they can pick up a scent and rub it on the top of their mouths and then can sense where an animal is just like how some whales have echolocation, this keeps them protected and at the top of the food chain because they can sense if their is danger coming and can also sense where their next meal is and that is how they survive with their tongues.

The next way komodo dragons survive so well, and are at the top of the food chain is because of their size. Komodo dragons are incredibly big just when they are born they are 12 inches long and at age 4 they are already 4 feet tall and you can probally tell the taller the better to hunt for prey. To add on to that by adults they are biggerer than a fully grown man!

The last way how Komodo dragons survive is how it's hard dry scales are like armor and the sharp calws that can rip through almost anything. Last of all to add on to that when ever their prey fights back their skin acts like leather and does not let anything go through and harm the body. That means that when they have battles with prey they almost always win.

In conclusion with all of these great characteristics the komodo dragon will most likely survive from the other surrounding pretedors. And those we're three reasons why komodo dragons will survive and why they are at the top of the food chain.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)

Idea Development—Score Point 3

The essay is moderately organized and includes an explanation of the physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive. The essay includes ideas about the claws, tongue, and teeth of the Komodo dragon. There is relevant information relating to each of the characteristics and a general explanation of how they are important for the Komodo dragon's survival. For example, "Komodo dragons can eat basically any animal they catch." There is an adequate expression of ideas and a sufficient awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 3C

The essay contains a variety of simple and complex sentences that show consistent control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Minor errors and missing punctuation do not interfere with the overall understanding of the essay. Given its length and complexity, the essay demonstrates consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

The Komodo dragon has alot of physical characteristics to help it survive. Let's see what some of these characteristics are and why they help them.

Let's start with it's CLAWS. Their claws are good for killing their prey. Komodo dragons can eat basically any animal they catch. From their own babys, to water buffalo. Their claws are extremely helpful to kill and tear apart their prey.

The Komodo dragon's TONGUE is pretty interesting. They pick up scents in the air with it. They can detect prey 3.1 miles away, and can tell which direction the're in by which side the tounge detcted the scent. That's a pretty interesting tounge.

The last Characteristic Im going to talk about is the TEETH. Their teeth can rip apart there prey in 1 minute. These teeth are so good at eating prey that they eat 80% of there body wight in a single feeding. So I guess we really shouldn't have that monsteros set of teeth.

Those are a couple of the different ways Komodo dragons have been built to live in there invirement.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)

Idea Development—Score Point 2

The essay includes a partially developed central idea of how physical characteristics help the Komodo dragon survive. Limited supporting evidence from the passage is included to explain how the tongue and claws of the Komodo dragon help them to catch food to survive: “The Komodo dragon uses his/her tongue when he/she hunts for food. . . . He/She uses his/her claws to fight another dragon or its prey.” The essay includes a basic expression of ideas and a partial awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 2

The essay contains sentences that are simplistic in structure, such as “First the dragon sticks out his/her tongue [tongue].” There are some punctuation and grammatical errors, such as “To help the Komodo dragons survive they uses there long tongue and big claws.” These errors do not detract from overall understanding of the essay. Given its length and lack of complexity, the essay demonstrates mostly consistent control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

To help the Komodo dragons survive they uses there long tongue and big claws. The Komodo dragon uses his/her tongue when he/she hunts for food. First the dragon sticks out his/her tongue. Next the dragon rubs his/her tongue against the top of his mouth. Lastly the dragon follows his/her prey and hopfully catches it. The Komodo dragon also uses his/her claws to survive. He/She uses his/her claws to fight another dragon or its prey. Also the baby dragons use there claws to climb up trees. The Komodo uses both his/her tongue and claws to survive in the wild.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)

Idea Development—Score Point 1

The response includes characteristics about the Komodo dragon but does not develop the central idea of how these characteristics help the Komodo dragon survive. The tail, tongue, and jaws are mentioned, but information about these characteristics is insufficient and not fully developed. There is a minimal awareness of the purpose for writing.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 1

The response demonstrates little variety in sentence structure and contains misspelled words, missing capitalization, and incorrect punctuation. The response lacks the complexity or length to demonstrate more than minimal control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

Based on Komodo Dragons these are three physical characteristics. First there muscular tails. this helps them for fighting and support for thier body. second is there tongue. this also helps because they can pick up scents from thier prey. At last their powerful jaws . this helps becuase it helps kil their prey. This is how these pysical characteristics help them survive.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)

Idea Development—Score Point 0

The response does not address the physical characteristics that help the Komodo dragon survive. The brief response indicates that the student looked at the passage and may be commenting on the photograph.

Standard English Conventions—Score Point 0

The response consists of a three-word sentence and is of insufficient length and complexity to demonstrate control of standard English conventions for this grade level.

They look cool.

[Back to Scoring Guides](#)